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REVIEWS

Authority in the Modern State. By HAROLD J. LASKI. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919. Pp. 398. \$3.00.

This is a very ingenious and subtle indictment of the unitary state and a plea for pluralism. The evil of the unitary state, according to the author, is its hypothesis of unlimited sovereignty, with the alleged assumptions that the state can do no wrong and that the preservation of the state is the sole criterion of political rightness. The authority of the state is the will of those, who, for the time being, control the government. In the complexities of modern life, with its basic economic problems, such a state cannot adequately represent the conflicting interests and convictions of the mass of men. The individual's will and conscience must be sacrificed to the state's demand for uniformity and acquiescence. "Uniformity is the negation of freedom. . . . It is thus the death of spontaneity; and to destroy spontaneity is to prevent the advent of liberalism." Moreover there is no reason to accept the state's subjective standards of rightness, and it is the duty of the citizen to pass his own judgment upon that of the state. "The allegiance of man to his state is secondary to his allegiance to what he may conceive his duty to society as a whole."

Thus it follows that labor "could admit the complete sovereignty of the state only if it could be assumed that the state were on its side." Therefore in the pluralistic government toward which the author thinks we are moving there will be a national legislature of producers and a national legislature of consumers. Nor are these central authorities to be "uniquely sovereign," for the producers will be divided according to industries perhaps and the consumers into territorial areas or otherwise so as to correspond with group demands.

The philosophical background of the thesis is provided in a very interesting discussion of Bonald, Lamennais, and Boyer-Collard, as well as of the growth of administrative syndicalism in France. The author's profound erudition in the history of political philosophy is here brilliantly illustrated. It is doubtful, however, if many readers will be convinced of the practicability of pluralism.

Mr. Laski has insisted upon identifying the unitary state with the seventeenth-century theory of sovereignty, with all of its moral and dogmatic implications. He then dismisses the question of legal sovereignty as having only a narrow usefulness for purposes of legal investigation. His point of view is extremely individualistic and ethical and he apparently proceeds upon two assumptions, viz., that a pluralistic state is practicable and that its determinations will be more nearly identical with ethical precepts. In the present volume he has not been concerned with the proof of either.

It seems obvious enough that one need not assume the theory of state infallibility in order to defend the necessary practicability of the modern unitary state. With all the conflicts between different groups of interest, which the author has clearly seen, one may argue for the practical necessity of law as the basis of co-operation and adjustment between these groups, and consequently for the careful location of a legally sovereign authority for the promulgation and application of such law, without asserting the ethical omnipotence of such authority.

Mr. Laski recognizes that there is need for some authority. He recognizes the inutility of such anarchistic philosophy as that of William Godwin. He recognizes that the problems of society cannot be solved by the producers and consumers acting alone, but only by their co-operation. What he seems to fail to see is that co-operation involves law, principles, or public policy, as a basis of co-operation; but these laws, principles, or public policies do not formulate or apply themselves; and that this requires the exercise of an authority that is sovereign over both. Herein lie the difficulties encountered in international organizations. It is this fact that prevents so-called federal governments from being really federal in the pluralistic sense. Our states are autonomous only within the limits fixed and interpreted by the people and the authorities of the United States. Without such supreme authority there is nothing to save us from the evils prevalent under the Articles of Confederation. How can there be effective co-operation between groups without a sovereign authority laying down the principles that govern the co-operative process? Until this definite problem can have a concrete answer the case for pluralism will not be taken seriously.

The problem is one that is based upon the inherent character of co-operative or social effort. The producers, if they are to guard their own interest effectively, must establish a legally sovereign power, which for the time being speaks with authority of the group. Otherwise jurisdictional disputes will rend their ranks. They cannot make effective

arrangements with consumers, unless those who bargain for them have the authority for the time being to bind the individuals and the industries for whom they speak. It follows therefore that if sovereign power were denied to the state it would have to exist in the group. It is inherent in the very nature of corporate effort which cannot become articulate save through the will of those who have authority to bind them. And this sovereign authority of the group may violate ethical precepts and individual rights as outrageously as the sovereign authorities of the present state. Thus there is no escape from the evils of sovereignty except by reverting to laissez faire theories of the state.

Were legal sovereignty over these economic groups to be denied and the group left absolutely to the devices of voluntarily adjusting their conflicting interests, it is inevitable that one group or another would secure the ascendancy in actual power and become the actual if not the legal sovereign. The increased peacefulness and efficiency of such a régime with its possible basis of effective co-operation would buy the acquiescence of the great majority. The history of group effort has always demonstrated the necessity of a sovereign authority to group efficiency, and that the obvious benefits of such authority has generally secured the necessary acquiescence.

The volume, because of its emphasis upon the ethical and individualistic point of view and its critical attack upon sovereignty and power as it finds expression in the modern state, should have great value. It will stimulate thought and perhaps compel a revaluation of current theories that have too long gone unstudied. The questions of constitutional restraints upon government, the limits beyond which centralization seems to be effective, the relation of authority, power, and obedience to the individual, to popular control, and to ethical precepts—all questions of fundamental importance—will receive new attention from those who read the volume.

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Australian Social Development. By CLARENCE H. NORTHCOTT. Columbia University Studies in History, Economics, and Public Law, No. 189. New York: Columbia University, 1918. Pp. 302. \$2.50.

Although Australian social and industrial experiments have for nearly a generation now attracted the attention of students in the social sciences, nearly all of the careful researches in this field have been made